

MY OFFICE PRIVACY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Confidentiality and privacy are the cornerstones of the mental health profession. Patients have an expectation that their communication with therapists, and their treatment records, will generally be kept confidential and will not be released to others without the written authorization of the patient. One of the purposes of the Notice of Privacy Practices is to inform and educate patients about the fact that there are exceptions to the general rule of confidentiality. Many of these exceptions have existed for years, and many of them are the result of laws and regulations being passed by state legislatures and by the federal government. These laws and regulations are essentially statements of public policy. My office policies and procedures, as well as the ethical standards of my profession, are intended to shape my practice so that privacy and confidentiality are maintained, consistent with California law and the federal "Privacy Rule."

1. I will maintain documentation of all consents, authorizations, Notice of Privacy Practices, Office Policies and Procedures, trainings, and patient requests for records or for amendments to records. I will also document complaints received and their disposition.
2. I will train all employees of my practice regarding the importance of privacy and confidentiality. At a minimum, these Office Policies and Procedures will be reviewed and discussed, as will the content of the Notice of Privacy Practices. The training will take place as soon as possible after the person is hired. For those who are already in my employ, I will train them by the printing of this document.
3. I will not maintain or use patient sign-in sheets.
4. Patient records are that are kept electronically (computer based, or internet based) are password protected, encrypted and comply with HIPPA guidelines. Any written patient records are kept in a locked file cabinet in my office when I am not there. Patient records will not be left in places in my office where others are able to see its contents. I will backup the computer upon each day either to a secure internet site and/or store the backup offsite. By doing so, I will be prepared in case of an incident of some kind that causes destruction, deletion, or damage to electronically store patient records. I will take steps to assure that patient records are accessed only by me or by those in my employ with my permission, who may need to access them on my behalf or on the patient's behalf.
5. Computers and fax machines will be placed appropriately so that access is limited to office personnel and so that confidential information transmitted or received is not seen by others.
6. Information and records concerning a patient may be disclosed as described in the Notice of Privacy Practices and in accordance with applicable law or regulation. Generally, I will obtain a written authorization from the patient before releasing information to third parties for purposes other than treatment payment, and health care operations, unless disclosure is required by law or permitted by law.
7. If mental health records are subpoenaed by an adverse party I will assert the psychotherapist-patient privilege on behalf of the patient and will thereafter act according to the wishes of the patient and the patient's attorney, unless I am ordered by a court or other lawful authority to release records or portions thereof.
8. I keep patient records for at least seven years from the date of last treatment. With respect to the records of a minor, I keep those records for at least seven years, or until the patient is twenty-one years old, whichever is longer. Thereafter, I may destroy patient records. When records are destroyed, they will be destroyed in a manner that protects patient privacy and confidentiality.
9. With respect to communication, I will attempt to find out from patients, as early as possible, how they prefer communication from me in relation to business matters (such as scheduling and billing). I will gather preferences on phone calls to home, cell, email and US mail. Texting is only used for scheduling and with prior permission from patient.
10. If I share protected health information about a patient with third party business associates as part of my health care operations (e. g. billing services), I will have a written contract with that business associate that contains terms that will protect the privacy of the patient's protected health information.
11. My duty of confidentiality and the psychotherapist-patient privilege survive the death of a patient.
12. I will do my best to ensure that electronic information, such as billing records and correspondence, is protected from computer viruses and unauthorized intruders.
13. Privacy Officer: I, Lisa Klipfel, am the privacy officer for this practice. I am the one responsible for developing and implementing these policies and procedures.
14. Contact Person: I, Lisa Klipfel, am the contact person for this practice. If a patient needs or desires further information related to the Notice of Privacy Practices, or if the patient has a complaint regarding these policies and procedures or our compliance with them, I am the person who should be contacted.
15. The effective date of these policies is April 14, 2003 and were revised June 9, 2011.